

The Records Gap: How America's 100 Largest School Districts Handle Former-Student Records Requests

We reviewed how each of the 100 largest US public school districts lets former students, colleges and employers request transcripts and records, using only what a former student can see on the district's public website.

By Data Decisions, makers of Transcend

67

districts use Parchment and/or ScribOrder, both owned by Instructure

23

districts have no district-level system, serving 3.0 million students

75

districts publish no process for closed-school records

39

districts are only partly centralized or not centralized at all

SUMMARY

Key findings

1

Two-thirds of the largest districts rely on one company.

67 of the 100 largest districts, serving about 5.9 million students, take alumni records requests through Parchment, Scribbles Software's ScribOrder, or both. Instructure owns both products: it completed its acquisition of Parchment in February 2024 and of Scribbles in July 2024.

2**Districts are being moved from one platform to the other.**

In 2026 alone we saw at least 6 large districts switch from ScribOrder to Parchment, or have their ScribOrder pages start redirecting to Parchment. A forced platform change is the natural time for a district to reconsider its options.

3**About one in four still has no district-level system.**

23 districts, serving about 3.0 million students, use no district-wide vendor. They rely on PDF forms, email, mail, money orders or each school's own process. The largest district in the country is one of them.

4**Where you went to school decides how hard it is.**

39 districts are only partly centralized or not centralized at all. Recent graduates are often sent back to their high school while older alumni go to a central office, sometimes with a different process, fee and payment method.

5**Closed schools and old records are a blind spot.**

75 of 100 districts publish no clear instructions for getting records from closed schools. Where older records are covered, they often mean mail-only requests, long turnarounds (up to 30–60 business days) or records lost to disasters.

6**Language access is thin.**

Only 3 districts published request forms or pages in three or more languages. Most rely on a Google Translate widget or English-only forms, in districts where a large share of families speak another language at home.

7**Employers pay more.**

Among the 59 districts that publish a former-student transcript fee, it runs from \$0 to \$15 (median \$5). Among the 37 that publish a price for employers and background-check firms, it runs from \$5 to \$35 (median \$15), often through separate, slower verification steps.

Methodology

Districts

The 100 largest US public school districts by fall 2021 enrollment (NCES data, via the standard ranked list).

Data collection

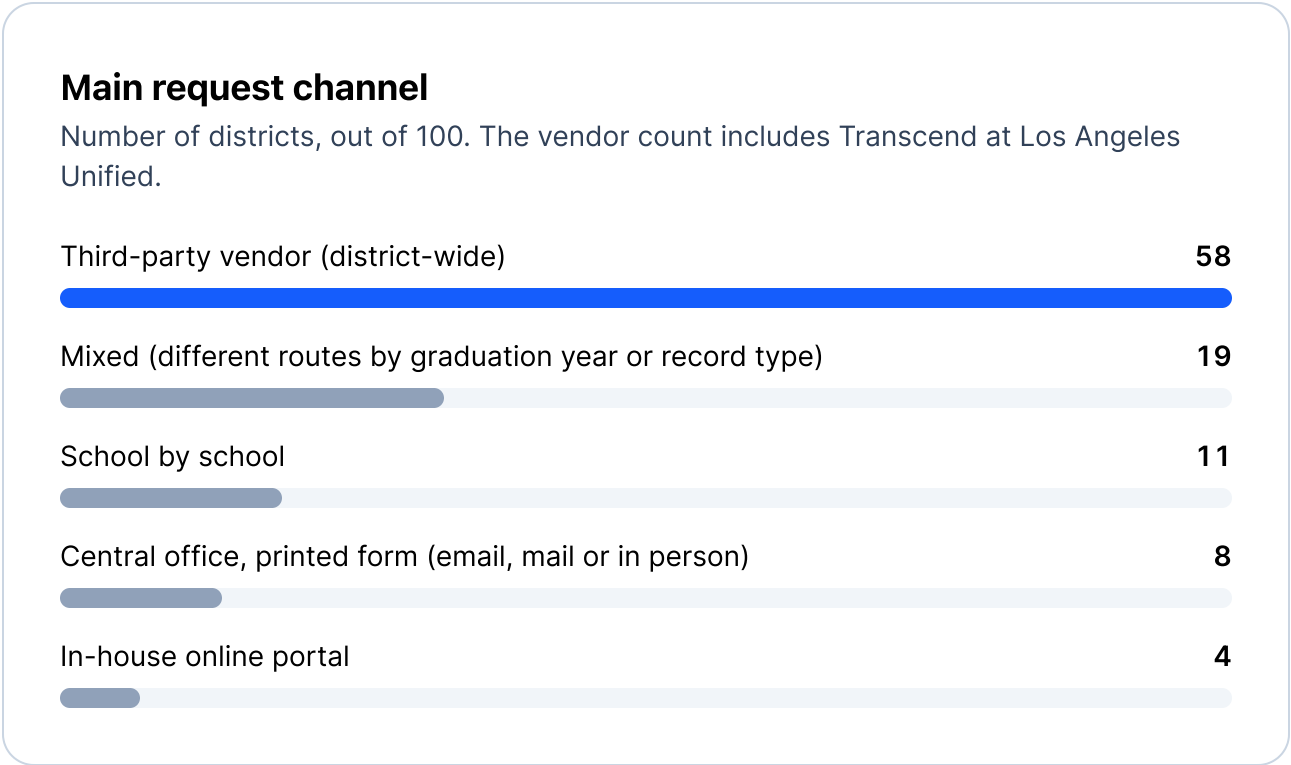
Between October 8 and 9, 2026, we reviewed each district's public website (and any ordering pages it linked to) as a former student would. We recorded the request channel, vendor, centralization, fees, turnaround, closed-school handling, ID checks, electronic delivery, languages and third-party access.

Limits

We only used public pages. We didn't submit requests or contact districts. Websites change, and some pages wouldn't load or needed JavaScript. Each record has a confidence rating (51 high, 41 medium, 8 low). "Unknown" means the information wasn't published, not that the district lacks it. Results are reported in aggregate only.

Findings in detail

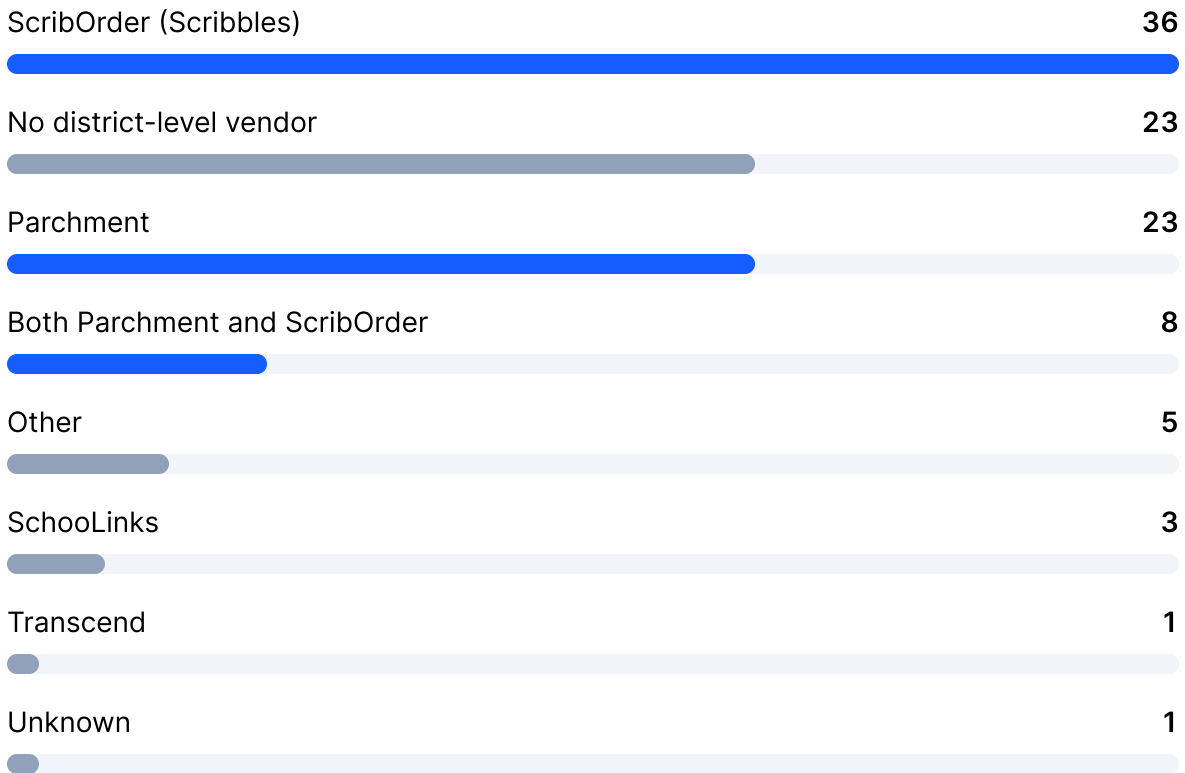
1. How former students make requests



2. Who provides the platforms

District-level vendor

Number of districts, out of 100. Blue bars are products owned by Instructure. "Other" covers Collector Solutions, GreenLight, National Student Clearinghouse and payment-only portals.



3. Common sources of friction

- Printable PDF forms that need a wet signature or notarization
- Mail-in requests paid by money order, check or cash, with a self-addressed stamped envelope
- A different process at every high school, with inconsistent fees
- Separate steps for identity check, payment and request ("submit, then wait for a payment link")
- Limited office hours for in-person pickup
- No electronic delivery to colleges or employers for older records

CHECKLIST

What a good process looks like

A checklist for districts reviewing their own process:

- ✓ One front door for every former student, whatever their graduation year, school or record type
- ✓ Online identity check and e-signature, with no notarization and no wet signature
- ✓ Online payment, with fee waivers where policy requires them
- ✓ Secure electronic delivery to the student, colleges (in the PESC standard format) and employers
- ✓ A clear, published path for closed schools and archived records
- ✓ Request pages in the languages families actually speak
- ✓ A separate, auditable path for third parties, with the student's consent recorded
- ✓ Staff work from one queue with turnaround reporting, instead of a shared inbox

Disclosure

Data Decisions makes Transcend, a records request platform used by Los Angeles Unified (#2 by enrollment). LAUSD's record in this benchmark reflects our own knowledge rather than web research.

About Transcend

Transcend is a records request platform for K-12 districts and colleges, built by Data Decisions. Los Angeles Unified uses it for former-student transcripts, diplomas, adult-education and special-education records. Learn more at edutranscend.com.

Sources

- Public websites of the 100 districts, reviewed October 8–9, 2026.
- Instructure, “Instructure Completes Acquisition of Parchment” (February 1, 2024), [Form 8-K, Exhibit 99.1](#).
- Instructure, “Instructure Completes the Acquisition of Scribbles” (July 1, 2024), [press release](#).
- Enrollment: NCES, fall 2021.